

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 7088

LIMDIS

NAIROBI FOR THE SECRETARY'S PARTY - PRIORITY

EO 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR FR IS UR US XF SY LE

SUBJECT: GROMYKO AND SAUVAGNARGUES ON THE MIDDLE EAST

REF: MOSCOW 6989

1. SUMMARY. THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR HAS BRIEFED

US ON THE SAUVAGNARGUES-GROMYKO DISCUSSIONS ON THE

MIDDLE EAST DURING GROMYKO'S VISIT TO PARIS LAST WEEK.

WE WERE TOLD THAT GROMYKO SAID THAT THE "PALESTINIANS"

WOULD HAVE TO BE IN ON BOTH STAGES OF A GENEVA CONFERENCE

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FROM THE BEGINNING; AND THAT GROMYKO ADMITTED LESS THAN

COMPLETE KNOWLEDGE REGARDING SYRIAN INTENTIONS VIS-A-VIS
LEBANON. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING QUADRIPARTITE MEETING MAY 4 THE FRENCH
AMBASSADOR (VIMONT), WHO WAS PRESENT DURING THE
GROMYKO-SAUVAGNARGUES DISCUSSIONS IN PARIS APRIL 27-30,
GAVE US THE FOLLOWING BRIEFING ON VIEWS EXPRESSED
DURING THESE DISCUSSIONS ON THE MIDDLE EAST.

3. HE SAID THAT THE MIDDLE EAST HAD ACCOUNTED FOR
FULLY HALF OF THE TIME THE TWO FOREIGN MINISTERS
SPOKE TOGETHER. HE SAID THAT SAUVAGNARGUES TOLD GROMYKO
THAT THE FRENCH FIND THE SOVIET CONCEPT OF A "GLOBAL
SOLUTION," AS EXPRESSED IN ITS STATEMENT APRIL 29,
"INTERESTING." SAUVAGNARGUES FURTHER TOLD GROMYKO
THAT THE SOVIET PROPOSAL FOR A TWO STAGE GENEVA
CONFERENCE WAS A "USEFUL STEP."

4. HOWEVER, WHEN SAUVAGNARGUES
BEGAN QUESTIONING GROMYKO ON WHAT THE SOVIETS ACTUALLY
HAD IN MIND FOR THE TWO STAGES, AND ASKED
IF THE PLO COULD PERHAPS PARTICIPATE UNDER THE UMBRELLA
OF THE ARB LEAGUE, GROMYKO APPARENTLY DUCKED THE
QUESTION, BUT DID REPLY, STOLIDLY, THAT THE PLO WOULD
HAVE TO PARTICIPATE IN BOTH STAGES. SAUVAGNARGUES AT
THAT POINT INFORMED GROMYKO THAT IF THAT WERE THE CASE,
THE SOVIET PROPOSAL IS "OF NO USE," ADDING THAT THE
US PROPOSAL FOR INFORMAL TALKS BEFORE THE CONFERENCE
IS CONVENED DID AT LEAST HOLD OUT SOME HOPE OF A SOLUTION.
VIMONT SAID GROMYKO THEN REPLIED THAT THE PALESTINIANS
WOULD NOT ONLY HAVE TO PARTICIPATE IN BOTH STAGES,
BUT ALSO FROM THE VERY BEGINNING.

5. VIMONT SAID THAT SAUVAGNARGUES AT THAT POINT REIT-
ERATED HIS JUDGMENT THAT THE SOVIET PROPOSAL CANNOT
SUCCEED. SAUVAGNARGUES ALSO ADDED, ACCORDING TO
VIMONT, THAT "AT LEAST THE KISSINGER PROPOSAL IS
INTELLIGENT."

6. SAUVAGNARGUES TOLD GROMYKO HE WELCOMED THE FACT THAT
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THE SOVIET UNION HAD FOR THE FIRST TIME OFFICIALLY
OFFERED AN INTERNATIONAL GUARANTEE OF A MIDDLE EAST
SETTLEMENT, VIMONT SAID. SAUVAGNARGUES WARNED, HOW-
EVER, THAT IT WOULD HAVE TO BE "CONCRETE AND CON-
VINCING" IF IT WERE TO BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE ISRAELIS.

7. VIMONT SAID THAT SAUVAGNARGUES ALSO VOICED THE
OPINION THAT THE SECURITY COUNCIL SHOULD NOT BE

ENTIRELY FORGOTTEN; IT TOO COULD PLAY A USEFUL ROLE. GROMYKO DISAGREED, VIMONT TOLD US, BECAUSE THE VETO ALWAYS COMES INTO PLAY. GROMYKO ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT SECURITY COUNCIL DEBATES "DID HAVE THEIR USES"--A REMARK VIMONT SAID HE TOOK TO REFER TO PROPAGANDA UTILITY.

8. GROMYKO, VIMONT TOLD US, PRAISED SYRIAN ACTIONS IN LEBANON, BUT STOPPED SHORT OF UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT. VIMONT PARAPHRASED HIS REMARK AS FOLLOWS: "WE UNDERSTAND THAT SYRIA IS ACTING AT THE INVITATION OF ALL PARTIES. BUT WE ABSTAIN ON A FINAL JUDGMENT ON SYRIAN POLICY IN LEBANON; GENERALLY, WE HAVE BEEN INFORMED, BUT WE DO NOT KNOW IN DETAIL EITHER THE SYRIAN POSITION ON LEBANON OR SYRIA'S INTENTIONS IN LEBANON." VIMONT SAID THAT GROMYKO BLUNTLY ASSERTED THAT LEBANON'S PRESENT PROBLEMS WERE DUE ENTIRELY TO EXTERNAL PRESSURES WHICH HAD FORCED PALESTINIAN REFUGEES ONTO ITS SOIL. "CERTAIN POWERS," GROMYKO REPORTEDLY CONTINUED, ARE HOPING TO USE THE LEBANESE CRISIS TO DESTROY THE PALESTINIANS AS A MOVEMENT AND TO PARTITION LEBANON. VIMONT SAID THAT GROMYKO NAMED ISRAEL AS ONE OF THE OFFENDING STATES, THOUGH HE REFERRED TO THE US ONLY INDIRECTLY. VIMONT SAID SAUVAGNARGUES REJECTED GROMYKO'S ALLEGATION, ASSERTING THAT HE HAD DISCUSSED THIS ISSUE PERSONALLY WITH SECRETARY KISSINGER AND THERE WAS NO INDICATION THE US FAVORED SUCH AN OUTCOME. ISRAEL HAD ALSO NOT INTERVENED IN LEBANON AND HAD "REMAINED TRANQUIL." THUS, IT IS NOT ONLY NOT VALID TO ACCUSE THE US OF ANY SUCH AIMS, IT IS NOT EVEN VALID TO ACCUSE ISRAEL, SAUVAGNARGUES REPORTEDLY SAID.

9. COMMENT: IF VIMONT'S RENDITION OF THE CONVERSATIONS IS CORRECT, GROMYKO'S STATEMENT THAT THE "PALESTINIANS" WOULD HAVE TO BE IN ON THE GENEVA NEGOTIATIONS FROM THE VERY CONFIDENTIAL

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BEGINNING BACKS WASY FROM THE IMPLIED FLEXIBILITY IN THE APRIL 29 STATEMENT. IF GROMYKO DID SAY "PALESTINIANS" REATHER THAN PLO, HOWEVER, HE MAY HAVE BEEN IMPLYING SOME FLEXIBILITY ON THE FORM OF PLO REPRESENTATION. SUCH AN INTERPRETATION WOULD ACCORD WITH WHAT SYTENKO SAID IN THE AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON HIM MAY 4 (REFTEL).

10. A FURTHER POINT OF INTEREST IS GROMYKO'S ADMISSION THAT THE SOVIET UNION DOES NOT IN FACT KNOW WHAT SYRIA SPECIFICALLY INTENDS VIS-A-VIS LEBANON. THIS BOLSTERS OUR FEELING THAT THE SOVIETS ARE VERY UNEASY AT THE PROSPECTS OF SOME KIND OF US-SYRIAN RAPPROCHEMENT ON THE MIDDLE EAST. VIMONT, NOTED THAT IN HIS VIEW THE SOVIETS WERE MOTIVATED IN ISSUING THE STATMENT, ASIDE FROM PROPAGANDA PURPOSES, BY THE FEAR OF WHAT A US-SYRIAN DIALOGUE OVER THE INSTABILITY

ON LEBANON COULD BRING -- INCLUDING THE POSSIBLE BEGINNINGS OF AN
ISRAELI-SYRIAN DIALOGUE WHICH THE SOVIETS WOULD REGARD AS
ADVERSE TO THEIR INTERESTS.

11. IN ANY CASE, THE INTEMPERANCE OF GROMYKO'S REMARKS ON ALLEGED
US AND ISRAELI AIMS IN LEBANON SUGGESTS THE EXTENT OF CURRENT SOVIET
FRUSTRATION OVER THEIR INABILITY TO INFLUENCE EVENTS THERE --
AND IN THE MIDDLE EAST IN GENERAL--AND ACCORDS WITH THE
RELATIVELY FEISTY TONE REGARDING THE US IN THE APRIL 29
SOVIET STATEMENT ON THE MIDDLE EAST.
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